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Place and Cultural Capital: Art Museum Visitors across Space

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Abstract

In the establishment of people's lifestyles, places, and especially cities, have become central arenas for display and consumption, and have become part of the aesthetic experience itself. These changes have affected the composition of cultural capital, which may have then taken an urban dimension. Art museum visitors, often associated with highbrow culture, constitute an excellent case study to explore the links between cultural capital and place. Based on a survey of 1900 visitors of the six main museums of modern and contemporary art in Belgium, this article will focus on the distribution of the audience characterized by their cultural tastes and activities across the Belgian territory (through their postcodes). It shows that visitors mainly come from areas with high and moderate density and that the socio-demographic but also urban characteristics of their place of residence can be related to the way visitors' cultural capital is composed. Yet, it also suggests that places like cities (just like museums) form meeting places, in which co-exist and interact different stories, different trajectories and, as this article shows, a multiplicity of lifestyles.

Keywords: Museum visitors; Pierre Bourdieu; cultural capital; audiences; Belgium.

Introduction

Where do art museum visitors come from? This is an important question for those who seek to assess the extent to which museums are able to recruit visitors from across their region, country or, even, beyond and to find ways to possibly expand their reach. Knowing the residential location of visitors is an essential measure of the power of attraction of museum and enables to differentiate local or more regionally based museums from international major touristic attractions.

Beyond this practical aspect, the question of geographical location turns out to be key to identify areas characterized by a quasi-absence of engagement with museum inside of a specific territory (e.g. a country). An examination of the cultural and socio-economic features of these areas also provides potential explanations for non-attendance. The first explanatory factor to come to mind is a lack of cultural institutions but, related to this, we also need to consider that some areas and neighbourhoods can act as a trap from which it is difficult to get away given structurally unequal conditions of existence. Following a belief in the power of culture to save post-industrial cities (Florida 2002), placing museums or other cultural institutions in deprived areas, sometimes without little form of intervention, has of late been seen as a way to perform cultural democratization. The choice of location of some recent art museums or institutions in some European countries would seem to confirm this. Although the intentions are good, it is somewhat naïve to assume that people struggling with social isolation, unemployment, lack of educational or professional qualifications, or other structural problems will magically start to go to the museum. And I have encountered situations where local people had no idea where their 'local' art museum was even situated, although the latter had opened years and sometimes decades ago, showing the force of symbolic boundaries.

The study of this 'ecological influence' on cultural participation reveals structural

mechanisms of exclusion and engagement associated with a 'neighbourhood effect': for instance, Stern and Seifert concluded that 'neighborhood characteristics' were as strong as individual characteristics in predicting the number of cultural events a person would attend in a given year' (2005: 9). Stern and Seifert showed how different neighbourhoods could be characterized by specific forms of cultural engagement, although these relationships between place and culture could change over time. They explained this link in three ways: social expectations; the intensity of the cultural scene in some neighbourhoods; or the opportunities for expanding taste for culture afforded by a rich community cultural life. This ecological thesis emphasizes the role of contextual variables to maintain or increase individual cultural participation but also runs the risk to see the living environment as a primary cause to specific patterns of participation, while the relationship between the two is most likely bidirectional with some people being more capable to actively choose and shape where they live than others. As Thomas Gieryn reminded us, 'a sociology informed by place' should be 'neither reductionist nor determinist': '[p]lace mediates social life; it is something more than just another independent variable' (2000: 467).

This paper does not seek to establish any causal role of the environment in visiting art museum, but rather to explore how place and culture interact using the example of art museum visitors in Belgium. More specifically I wish to investigate the extent to which the theory of cultural capital can help us to perceive territorial boundaries as symbolic ones. After all, Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Darbel 1969) himself developed the premises of his theory when he studied art museum attendance but did not map out how configurations of cultural capital created symbolic boundaries within the geographic space.¹ This article intends to shed light on this by answering the following question: can the socio-demographic characteristics but also the degree of urbanity of their place of residence be related to the way visitors' cultural capital is composed (so the set of cultural preferences and tastes and activities that defined them)?

I first start by discussing the theory of cultural capital and its recent developments in line with wider changes in the social and cultural field. This allows me to suggest that these changes have affected the composition of cultural capital and that cultural capital may have taken on an urban dimension. This has had an impact on people's relationships with space, and especially urban space. Especially there may be now various forms of highbrow culture which develop different relationship to cities. Second, I explain why art museum visitors constitute a very good case study to explore this transformation of highbrow culture and its link to geographical space. The focus on highbrow culture is particularly relevant for this study, since art museum attendance remains influenced by social position and more particularly by educational attainment (DiMaggio 1996; see Guérin 2009; Lievens *et al.* 2005 for Belgium). Third, after having presented the sample and the methodology, I examine maps of museum attendance and compare them with socio-demographic maps. The exercise of visual associations leads to two main findings: first, the degree of urbanization of visitors' place of residence is most related to museum attendance and visitors with different cultural profiles are characterized by different patterns of geographical distribution. These findings are discussed in light of the cultural capital theory (Bourdieu 1979a; 1979b), since I argue that there is a clear relation between the characteristics of the visitors' place of residence and the composition of their cultural capital. Yet, this article also shows that a same place can be woven together with diverse cultural patterns.

Re-configuration of cultural capital in place

In order to understand the link between culture and place, it is important to go back to what defines our relationship to culture and its products, namely our cultural resources and skills or what Bourdieu called 'cultural capital'. As has been long established by now, cultural capital combined with economic and social capital positions individuals in the social space and shapes their cultural consumption by providing symbolic access to some cultural genres and items and limiting it to others.

In his book written with Darbel (1969), Bourdieu drew a link between highbrow cultural participation and cultural capital. Highbrow cultural participation, as measured by the participation to traditional cultural activities deemed to require aesthetic or intellectual refinement, was an indicator of cultural capital. They revealed that whilst art museums were open to everyone

their visitor profiles showed that them to be mainly upper and middle class institutions. Far from being (only) an economic issue, this paradox illustrated the role of cultural capital, and more specifically that of cultural knowledge inherited from the family, in determining museum attendance. This knowledge or cultural capital which is later augmented by the level of education leads, it was shown, to an individual propensity or disposition to consume cultural goods. Those who have been initiated to highbrow culture (and its institutions) by their family early in their life develop a stronger appetite for cultural participation.

Bourdieu (1979b) later refined his notion of cultural capital and differentiated three different forms of capital, embodied (in dispositions), objectified (in cultural goods) and institutionalized (in degrees and diplomas). The objectified forms of cultural capital refer to material supports in which cultural capital can be expressed and transmitted, such as cultural goods (writings, paintings, etc.). These objectified forms require economic resources to be bought (material appropriation) and the embodied capital to be appreciated (symbolic appropriation). Institutionalized form validates embodied cultural capital. Cultural capital in its embodied forms, which is the most determining, refers to a set of internalized dispositions that enable people to appreciate artistic and cultural items but also to develop 'good manners'. People with high cultural capital have *naturally* good taste, which gives them a greater social value and possibly a better position in the social space. They are predisposed to like highbrow culture, i.e. cultural forms which require intellectual and aesthetic skills and knowledge to be appreciated.

This is the basis of his book *Distinction* (1979a) in which he contended that tastes could not only mirror people's natural inclinations but also acted as social markers. Bourdieu's theory gives a quite complex picture of the – French – society at that time and particularly underlined the importance of cultural capital in social stratification. Those socialized in a culturally rich milieu more likely develop an 'aesthetic disposition' and to acquire cultural skills through the 'habitus', which converts social position into a set of dispositions, skills and attitudes guiding cultural consumption. An aesthetic disposition is an ability 'to "decode" the formal [aesthetic] structure of the cultural work' (Lizardo 2008: 2). For Bourdieu there is a correspondence between social space and lifestyle space.

These mechanisms of social positioning and position-taking in a social field according to the level and types of resources at disposal described by Bourdieu more than thirty years ago still operate today. Yet, the cultural content specified by some of his key concepts may have changed and so may need to be updated (Prior 2005). This is especially true for concept of cultural capital: whereas Bourdieu framed the concept with a modernist emphasis on strongly classified high and lowbrow cultures, empirically this does not reflect new developments in the cultural and social spheres. Nonetheless, arguing for a reconsideration of the content attributed to cultural capital does not in any case contradict Bourdieu's relational approach for which,

objects under investigation are seen in context, as a part of a whole [and] [t]heir meaningfulness is determined not by the[ir] characteristic properties [...] but rather with reference to the field of objects, practices, or activities within which they are embedded (Mohr 2013).

This implies that the meanings associated with cultural items can change as new forms of culture and aesthetics are produced and new actors emerge in the field of cultural production. It is also true to the historical nature of the habitus (Wacquant 1996), which absorbs contextual transformations and processes them into dispositions. All of this seems to have been forgotten by those who continue to use the notion of 'highbrow culture' in a very standard and unchanged way.

Indeed, highbrow culture cannot anymore be only related to a highbrow aesthetic à la Bourdieu that valorizes form over content and a distanced relationship to art. Cultural producers and consumers have increasingly embraced new aesthetic criteria, such as postmodernist ones, that challenge the separation from the commercial and popular, and endorse a 'playful' aesthetic (Featherstone 1991; Lash 1989) based on experimentation (Hanquinet et al. 2014). The changes in what is now aesthetically refined can explain the emergence of the now well-known figure of the 'omnivore' (Peterson and Simkus 1992; Peterson and Kern 1996) who is keen to engage with different forms of high-, middle- and, to a certain extent, low-brow cultures. This apparent eclecticism does not translate as the collapse of cultural hierarchies, but rather

as a complex re-structuration of the cultural capital which includes dispositions to appreciate established but also more 'emerging' cultural forms (Prieur and Savage 2013; Friedman et al. 2015). As others have also argued (DiMaggio and Mukhtar 2004), the composition of cultural capital has been altered accordingly.

More importantly for our paper, these changes affecting the formation of cultural capital may also have had an impact on people's relationships with space, and especially urban space. The new postmodernist cultural climate has favoured a certain fusion between art and everyday life, not only with the rise of eclecticism, but also with playful and hedonistic lifestyles essentially urban, which has an impact on the cultural capital as well. Indeed, postmodernism has also promoted the development of hedonistic lifestyles focused on self-expression through stylistic and essentially aesthetic choices in terms of clothing, living environment, and food (Featherstone 1991). In short, everyday life has been more and more aestheticized and even more so in urban areas, which have become 'symbolic economies' (Zukin 1995) based on the promotion of images and signs following the development of entertainment industries, media, and tourism. Urban space has also experienced the expansion of cultural and creative industries which have brought with them new avant-gardes spreading around new artistic and intellectual lifestyles (O'Connor 2013; Lloyd 2004). While Bourdieu certainly emphasized the role of central urban places, especially Paris, as provider of cultural resources and opportunities, his conception of cultural capital did not entail an urban dimension (Savage and Hanquinet n.d.). Cultural capital was not dependent on urban experience or, even, on urban culture. Cities could be contemplated, observed, described, represented, but never lived as a transcendental aesthetic experience. Yet it is precisely this relationship to cities, as a means to provide sensory challenges that would transport people away from the mundane world – which has been transfigured by the rise of new aesthetic conceptions.

With postmodernism, a more participatory and inclusive vision of cultural artefacts has sprung up and this has modified people's relationship to their material environment. This environment has an aesthetic component containing sign-values or images (Lash and Urry 1994). In their cultural consumption, people are increasingly preoccupied by the stylization of their everyday life. In the establishment of these lifestyles, places, and especially cities, have become central arenas for display and consumption, and have become part of the aesthetic experience itself. Art has become 'contextual' (Ardenne 2004) and directly depends on place. Mike Savage and I have developed the notion of 'urban cultural capital' (n.d.) to illustrate this new dimension, essentially urban, of the aesthetic experience and to explore how it feeds into the composition of mainly young privileged urban groups' cultural capital. We have argued that it is only when the highbrow modernist aesthetic became less central that cultural capital started to be linked to the aesthetic experience of a city. Cities are now lived and consumed as resources for cultural capital because our aesthetic relationship to things has profoundly changed. It has become all about participation, instead of introspection and detachment.

This detour via the literature on the transformations of cultural capital was necessary to understand that different configurations of cultural capital exist and draw on tensions not only between popular and highbrow cultures, but also within highbrow culture. More especially, people with a more postmodernist profile in terms of tastes and cultural activities may develop a certain affinity with the urban space as source of aesthetic experience, while those with a more modernist cultural profile may be less attached to urban places. This is line with research showing that culturally active or 'engaged' people were more selective in regard to the areas in which they live (according their cultural - modern or classical – orientations), compared to those who are less culturally engaged and more spread around across a territory (Hanquinet et al. 2012). In certain areas, especially those which are socially and ethnically mixed, there are then different lifestyles that co-exist, illustrating the fact that people's places of residence reflect complex processes of constraints and choices. This could be also referred to as a system of 'social tectonics' where in some areas '[s]ocial groups or "plates" overlap or run parallel to one another without much in the way of integrated experience in the area's social and cultural institutions' (Butler and Robson 2001, 2157). Unsurprisingly then, I conceptualize space and place in relational terms following Massey's approach. Place would then represent a 'particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus' (Massey 1994:154) at a given time that stretch out over space. The maps used in this article depict

Belgium as a relational space whose meanings, although constantly changing, can be captured at a moment in time through snapshots of the socio-cultural relations between and within places. Using the example of art-museum visitors, this article explores these correspondences between the space of lifestyles and geographical space and maps the residential location of visitors according to their cultural profiles. In so doing, this enables us to explore affinities between specific configurations of tastes and practices –or cultural capital – place.

Focus on art museum visitors

Before detailing my sample and methodology, I would like to explain why a focus on art museum visitors is particularly telling for the analysis of the links between place and culture. Museums are not isolated islands and hence capture and mirror more general changes in the social and cultural spheres (Prior 2003). What is happening inside museums, and how they develop and change over time, echoes larger social processes that have placed culture at the core of social stratification. For instance, the aesthetic transformations I discussed above have impacted on the role museums themselves opt take up in the society. They 'become revamped to cater for wider audiences through trading-in the canonical, auratic art and educative-formative pretensions for an emphasis upon the spectacular, the popular, the pleasurable and the immediately accessible' (Featherstone 1991: 96-7). Moreover such a shift is visible in the diversification of 'cultural profiles' (term inspired by Lahire 2006) inside the supposedly elitist art museums (Hanquinet 2013a; 2013b). Cultural profile, which refers to a more specifically cultural dimension of lifestyles, is considered as a set of cultural, creative and leisure activities, tastes in various areas and knowledge of art, which classify and can be classified. However, art museums have remained institutions privileged by upper and middle classes: visitors are likely to have a disposition towards highbrow culture. But those who do have such a disposition differ from each other depending whether they favour a modernist or postmodernist cultural orientation. Examining their place of residence provides us with very useful insights into how different configurations of cultural capital and of highbrow culture spread out across space and are attached to places.

Therefore, in studying art museums, a focus on visitors' cultural profiles rather than on their social class will lead to more refined observations on the links between place and culture, since visitors are likely to be rather homogeneous in terms of their social background. These profiles will be related as a second step to some socio-demographic characteristics. Among these, education and age will be privileged since a particular relationship between them and lifestyle formation has been outlined, when compared to income and gender (van Eijck and Bargeman 2004). Age has actually become essential in the understanding of the development of new forms of distinction as 'emerging' forms of cultural capital tend to more strongly associated with younger generations (Friedman *et al.* 2015; Reeves 2016). In addition, attention will be paid to people's socio-professional status (e.g. students, pensioners, employees, at home, etc.) but more importantly to whether their education and/or their occupation show an orientation towards art and culture. Lievens *et al.* (2005) highlighted the importance of the 'content' of people's occupation (whether more economic or more cultural) to account for cultural participation. If they inform about the visitors' social positions, these socio-demographic features are also able to provide more detailed information on who the visitors are (they are not 'simply' 'snobs' from the upper-middle classes, to put it bluntly). They hence shed further light on the correspondences that may exist between culture - through cultural profiles - and place in people's daily life.

Finally, museums not only mirror wider social transformations; they can take part in them. Zukin (1995) showed their symbolic role in the expansion of cities. They can be iconic figures of cities' cultural landscape and touristic attractions. They may also represent the hope to regenerate socially deprived areas by possibly attracting new creative and cultural classes, although cultural development may be a rather naïve 'fix' for urban problems (Peck 2007). They aesthetically shape the places where they are located and the life of those who consume and do not consume them. For all these reasons, focusing on art museum visitors appears an appropriate strategy to further grasp how the connexion between place and culture operates.

Sample

The survey took place in 2007-2008 in six different modern and contemporary art museums in Belgium. It covered the different regions of the country with two museums in Flanders (one in Ghent, one in Antwerp), two museums in Brussels (one in Ixelles and one in the city centre) and two in Wallonia (one in Boussu near Mons and one in Liège). In each museum the survey was undertaken during three non-consecutive weeks, including one week of school holidays. During these weeks, specific time-slots in the morning, at noon and in the afternoon were selected during which interviewers asked visitors (aged at least 15) to complete a self-administered questionnaire (available in French, Dutch and English) at the end of their visit. The sample sizes per museum are as follows: 173 for MAMAC² (Museum of Modern Art and Contemporary Art of the City of Liège), 182 for XL (Ixelles Museum in the Brussels Region), 254 for M HKA (Museum of Contemporary Art in Antwerp), 284 for S.M.A.K. (Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art of Ghent), 312 for MAC's (The Museum of Contemporary Arts in Boussu) and 695 for MRBA (Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium located in Brussels) (N=1900). This is fairly representative of their respective size: MRBA (including the Museum of Ancient Art not investigated here) attracted more than 400,000 visitors in 2007, whereas all the others tend to count less than 100,000 visitors a year (with MAMAC, XL and M HKA being usually below 50,000 visitors a year at the time of investigation). The total response rate varies from 44 per cent (for MRBA) to 62 per cent (for S.M.A.K.). Four museums out of the six have a response rate higher than 50 per cent.

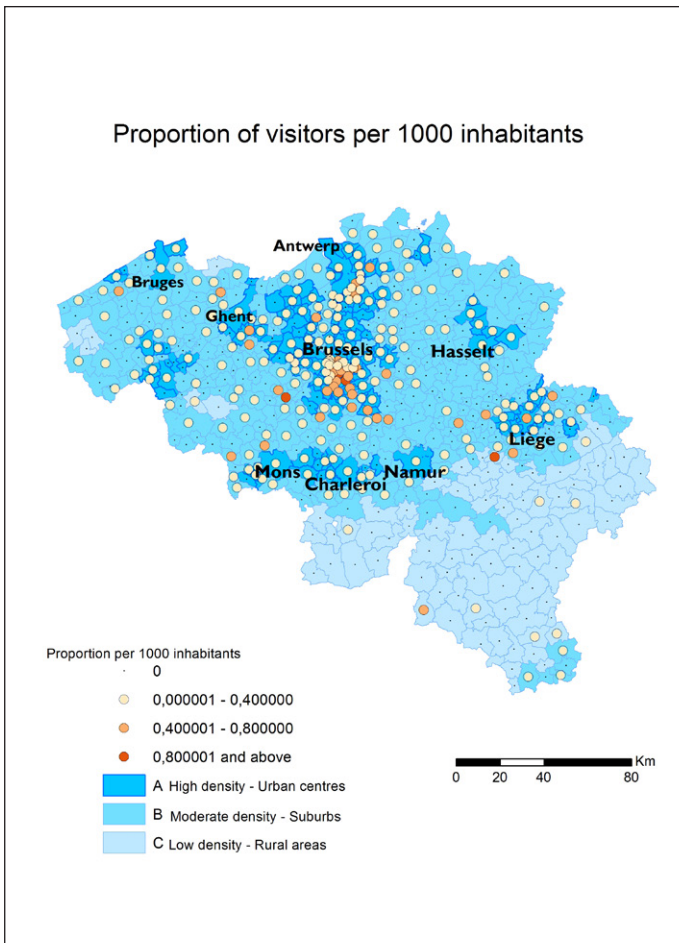
The sample characteristics confirm the usual trends of museum audiences (Ranshuysen 2001). Visitors tend to be older and more highly educated than the general Belgian population. A significant majority of visitors (79 per cent) hold a higher education diploma, whereas around a quarter of the general population living in Belgium has such an education level. Workers are largely under-represented compared to the general population. This outlines the privileged position of the art museum audience. The average age is 45 years old, 16.5 per cent are younger than 25, 28 per cent are between 25 and 44 years old and 56 per cent are older than 44; 41 per cent are men and 59 per cent are women.

However, for this analysis, I will concentrate on the visitors who reside in Belgium only. The sample size became 146 for M HKA, 180 for S.M.A.K. 457 for MRBA, 142 for XL, 249 for MAC's and 138 for MAMAC (n=1312).

Methods

This article uses geographical maps to investigate the relationships between place and cultural capital. Maps form insightful visual tools to situate the visitors' lifestyles in a geographical space and to assess their correspondence with socio-demographic criteria. One of the aims of this article is to open new methodological perspectives in museum studies, such as the use of maps. But it should be clear that this method is exploratory in essence and based on visual associations which are not controlled for other variables (using statistical tests). In this article, I focus on the national scale partly because it is rare to have a sample of museum audience covering such a scale³. However, it is evident that spatial dynamics are never limited to national frontiers. I do not have either the time or the room here to provide a detailed focus on the different cities I am going to discuss, although this could be done in future research.

Through my quantitative survey, I collected the postcodes and names of the visitors' places of residence.⁴ I focused only on visitors residing in Belgium and it should be said that Belgian postcodes tend to delimitate larger territories than they do in other countries (such as the UK). These postcodes were then regrouped using a territorial code designed by the National Institute for Statistics, now called 'Statistics Belgium' (I will use the acronym NIS). The NIS codes are 5 digit numbers associated to each 'commune'⁵. There is equivalence between postcodes and NIS codes. The number of inhabitants for each of these NIS codes was calculated to exclude the youngest as my survey sampled people aged at least 15 years old. The next section presents a general map relating museum attendance to the degree of urbanization of each NIS sector as defined by Eurostat. According to Statistics Belgium, the degree of urbanization is defined in Belgium in the following way: zone A formed by a contiguous set of communes



Map 1. Proportion of visitors per 1000 inhabitants *Note. The map background for the maps made by the author has been provided by IGEAT (ULB)*

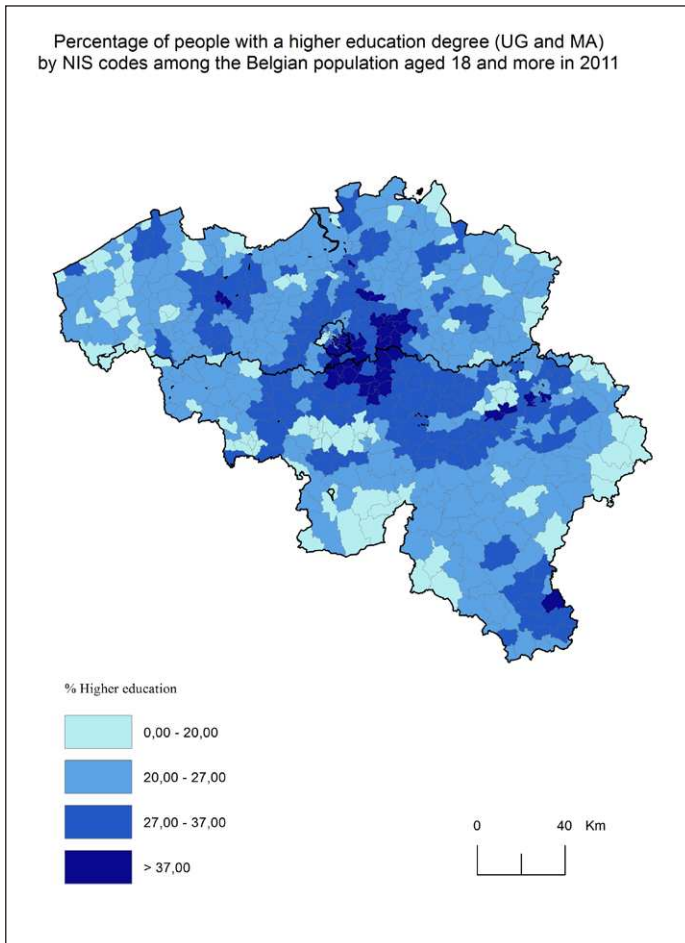
tions constituting space (captured by these maps) become apparent when one looks at the entire set of maps. Each map will also be described in terms of interactions of places as 'particular constellation[s] within the wider topographies of space' (Massey 2005: 131). Places will be here mainly cities and will be interpreted in terms of their physicality and material form and, when possible, in terms of how they have been perceived and narrated (Gieryn 2000).⁷

Where do visitors come from?

These sectors are also defined by their degree of urbanity. Map 1 shows quite strikingly that visitors are mainly from areas with high and moderate density, especially in and/or around Ghent, Antwerp, Brussels and Liège. There are almost very few visitors in the Southern rural areas. This suggests a clear divide between urban or semi-urban areas on the one hand and rural areas on the other hand in terms of museum attendance. This could partly reflect that there are fewer cultural institutions in these areas, but Belgium is a small country in which everything is always situated within a reasonable distance. In addition to this, quite a few rural areas are almost

each with high density (more than 500 hab./km²) and with a total population of at least 50000 habitants; zone B formed by a contiguous set of communes each with intermediate density (more than 100 hab./km²) and with a total population of at least 50000 habitants or adjacent to a highly populated area); zone C with low density.⁶

All the following maps created (with ArcGIS) with the data from the survey include a measure of the degree of urbanization as a way to assess the link between cultural capital and urban space. I will start by discussing maps including the whole population of visitors surveyed and the Belgian population before moving on to maps detailing the geographical distribution of visitors endowed with specific forms of cultural capital. Each of these maps alone gives little information but should be analyzed and interpreted in relation to the others. The social rela-

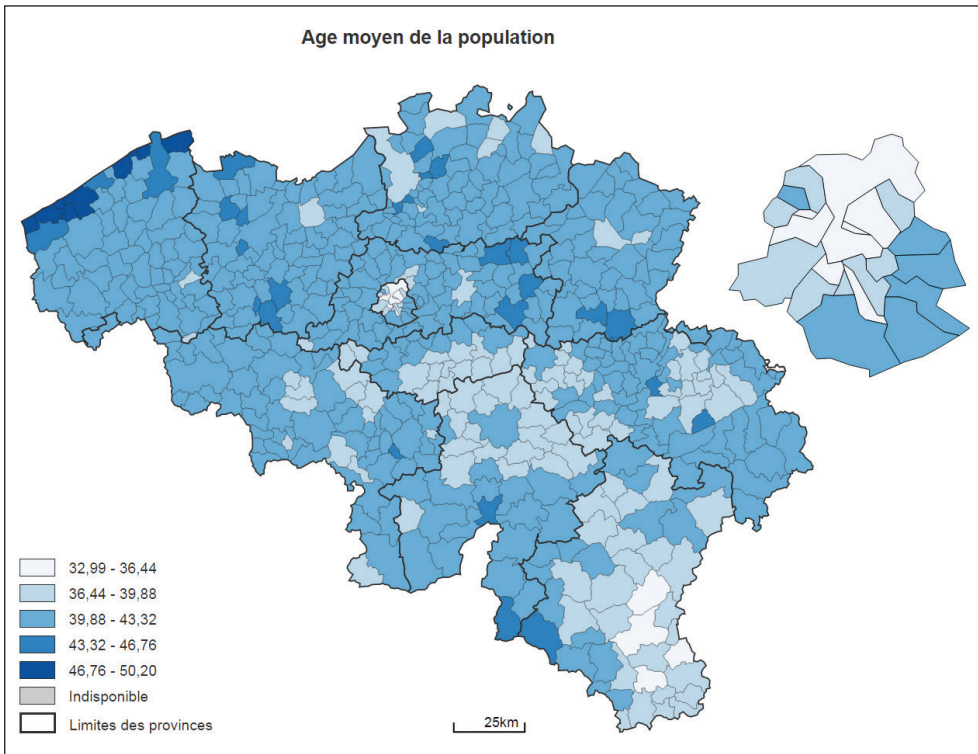


Map 2. Percentage of people with a higher education degree (UG and MA) by NIS codes among the Belgian population aged 18 and over in 2011 Source: Census 2011 – SPF Economie

adjacent to cities like Mons and Liège, whose cultural institutions would be easily accessible for their inhabitants. Moreover, the most Southern part of the country and hence the furthest away from these cities does include a proportion of visitors. These areas are semi-urban though, supporting the idea of the influence of the degree of urbanization. However, the proportion of visitors seems to vary from one city to another. Not surprisingly, visitors are over-represented in Brussels and its commune. The South and the South-East of Brussels appear to be characterized by high proportions of visitors, especially the communes of Ixelles and Watermael-Boitsfort. Another study on cultural participation in Brussels has indeed shown that these two communes attract cultural amateurs, although the former is associated with more modern forms of culture and the latter with more classical ones (Hanquinet *et al.* 2012). Visitors are rather under-represented in other cities such as Charleroi,

Bruges, Namur, and Hasselt. Charleroi is an interesting study case: it is the second largest city in Wallonia and located quite close to one of the museums investigated. One could have expected to find more visitors in this area. However, this former leading industrial power has fallen into decline following its progressive de-industrialization and has been struggling with structural social problems (see Map 2 as well).⁸ It has recently been trying to change its image by promoting the (alternative) artistic potential of the city but, at the time of the survey, the attendance rate remained quite low, although not absent.⁹ When reading and interpreting the maps of visitors, it is important to note that museums can recruit visitors from across the country and not only from their surrounding areas. Therefore the patterns visible in the maps do not simply illustrate and 'add up' the power of attraction of each of these six specific museums within their region.¹⁰

Maps 2 and 3 help evaluate the relationship between museum attendance on the one hand and education and age on the other. As already explained, these two characteristics are strongly related to the formation of lifestyles (in which museum attendance takes part) (van Eijck, Bargeman 2004). The two maps serve as ways to perform 'visual regressions'. Map 2 shows the percentage of people with a higher education diploma¹¹ (UG and MA, excluding



Map 3. Mean age of the population living in Belgium

Source : Census 2011 – SPF Economie, map created by Statistics Belgium¹²

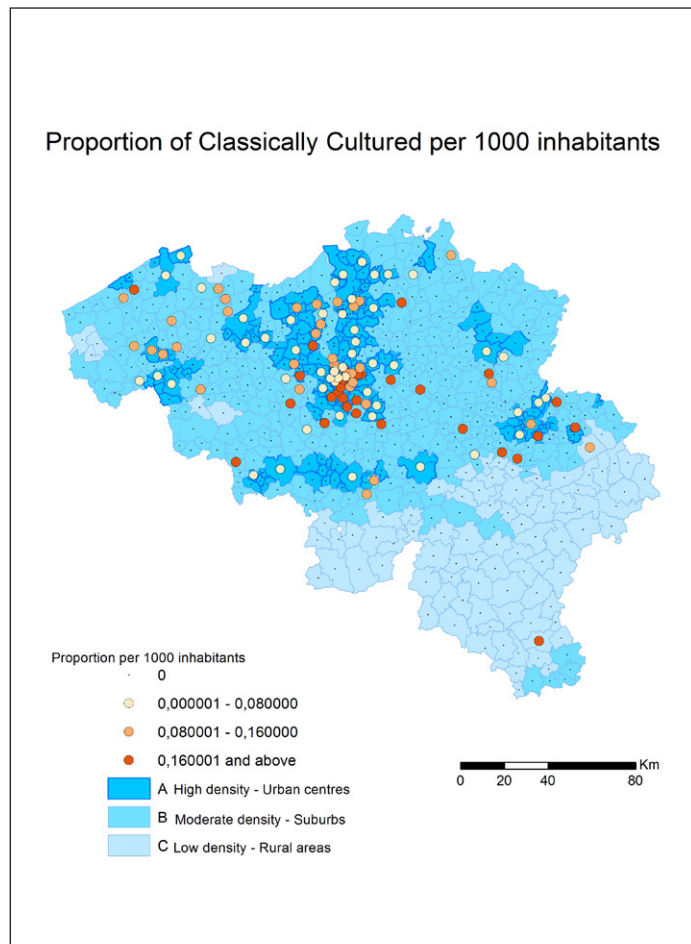
PhD) by NIS codes among the Belgian population aged 18 and more in 2011 (last census). This map overlaps to a certain extent with the previous one. The four major urban areas where we can find visitors, i.e. Ghent, Antwerp, Liège, and Brussels, are characterized by a high concentration of people with higher education, although Brussels also offers a contrasting view in terms of education (with adjacent areas with high and low concentration). The Southern areas below Brussels are the most educated ones, showing a link with a high proportion of visitors in Map 1. However, Bruges and Namur have a non-negligible percentage of people with higher education but rather low rates of museum attendance in comparison. This rate of attendance is, interestingly, comparable to that of Charleroi characterized by a low rate of higher education. The role of education in museum attendance does not appear linear in these areas. Similarly, if some external rural areas are characterized by a very low concentration of higher education, most rural areas have at least 20 per cent of their population with higher education and the most Southern parts are characterized by a high level of education in line with their higher museum attendance.

Map 3 illustrates the mean age of the population living in Belgium. The link between age and museum attendance is less clear. Some of the areas with a high age mean are indeed characterized by high concentration of visitors (*around* Antwerp for instance) and it is true that the Southern more rural part of the country, with low if not absent attendance, is the youngest on average. Yet, despite these correspondences, the comparison of maps tends to suggest that visitors can come from different generations. This will be explored further in the next section which links different configurations of people's cultural capital with geographic areas of residence.

Link between place of residence and cultural capital

In this section, I explore the affinities between specific configurations of tastes and practices and place. To do so, I rely on a typology of visitors according to their 'cultural profile' that I have defined in previously published work (Hanquinet 2013a; 2013b; 2014). In short, the typology results from an ascending hierarchical classification based on a multiple correspondence analysis using variables on tastes about music, reading and art/ art knowledge/ attendance at art and cultural places/ practice of creative activities/ purchase of art works, reproductions and books/ other leisure activities. Six different profiles have emerged and reflect different compositions of cultural capital. In what follows, I focus on only four of these groups:¹³ the classically cultured (n=270 living in Belgium), the cultured progressists (n= 170), the hedonists (n=286) and the art lovers (n=340). I am aware that the sample size for each of them is rather small and that some caution is required when interpreting the maps. Nonetheless the maps reveal insightful trends for an exploratory study. The proportional scales in each map have been adapted to the size of each group.

Map 4 presents the proportion of classically cultured per 1000 inhabitants in each NIS area. This group dislikes the most contemporary visual art forms and music (electro, hard rock, etc.) but appreciates what can be defined as classical highbrow culture and tends to go to the opera, classical music concerts, and theatre. They are, hence, characterized by a classical highbrow aesthetic. They are located in the most urbanized areas and over-represented in the south of Brussels, in the southern periphery of Brussels, in the suburban areas of Liège, and to a lesser extent of Antwerp and Ghent. They are otherwise quite rare in Wallonia and the cities of Mons and Namur. This link with Brussels and Liège (and Charleroi to some extent) may reflect the fact that these cities host more traditional and established art institutions that would suit more an appreciation of classical highbrow culture. Certainly, in our sample, the museums located in both cities tend to have a more classical outlook than those in Ghent, Antwerp or Boussu (near Mons), through their buildings, their collection (mixing modern and contemporary art) and their approach to visitors. In addition, even if they live in urban

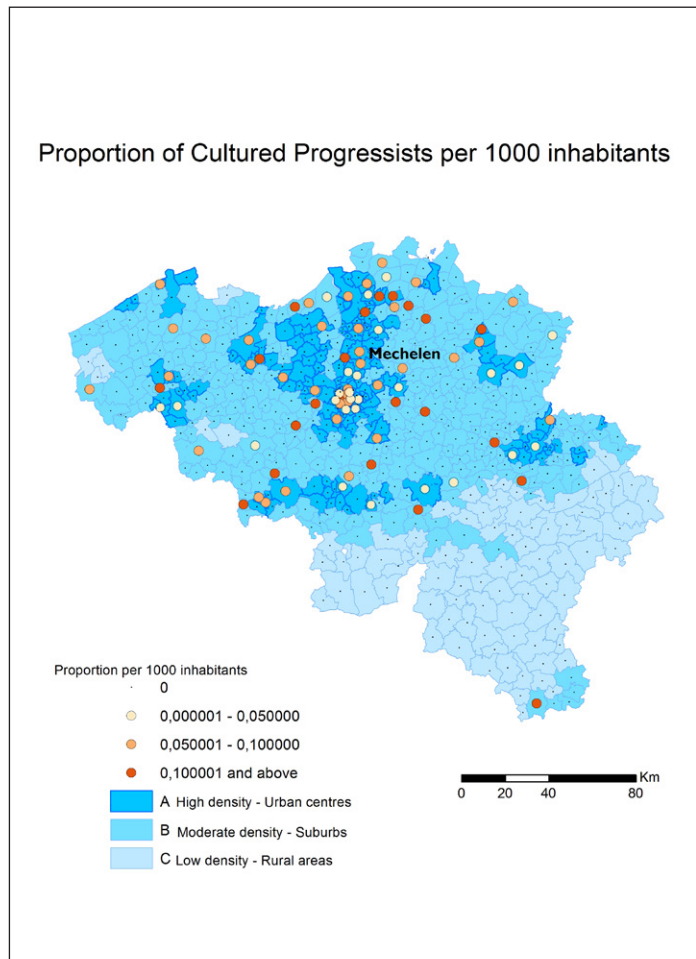


Map 4. *Proportion of Classically Cultured per 1000 inhabitants*

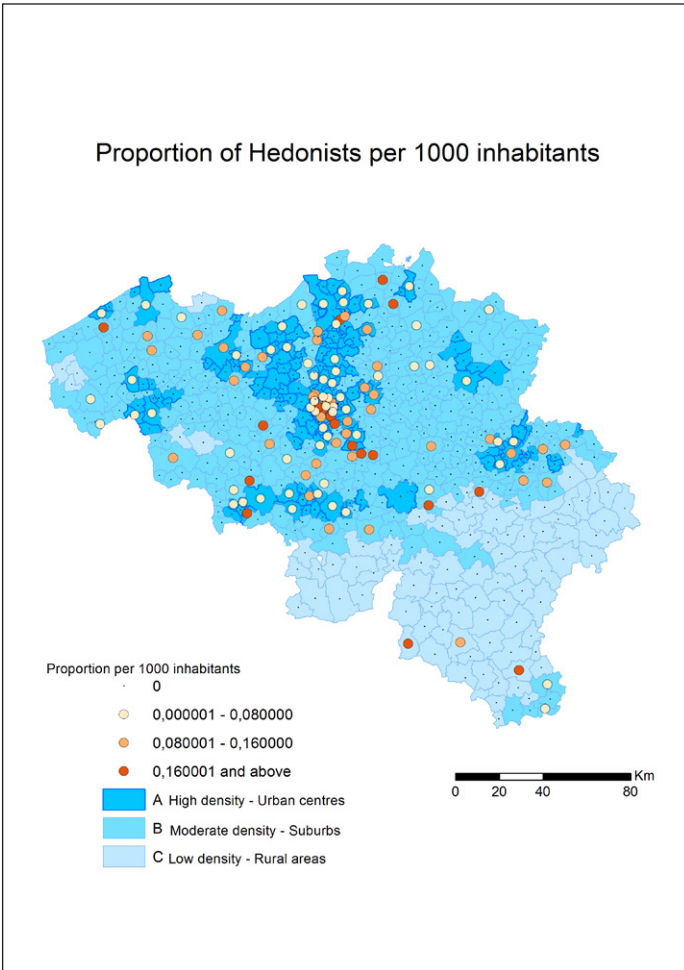
areas, these visitors are more rarely located in the city centres but rather at a close distance from them. Their geographical distribution overlaps to some extent with their socio-demographic characteristics if we look at Maps 2 and 3. They are indeed the oldest group on average out of the four investigated here. They are highly educated (university degree) and managerial and executive positions and liberal professions are over-represented in this group.

In contrast, the cultured progressists (Map 5) are also attracted to urban areas (with high and moderate density) but are more evenly scattered across them, compared to the previous group. They tend, however, to live near a few major cities of Belgium when they are located in a moderate density area. These visitors are characterized by more young, culturally diversified and active profiles. They like contemporary music and visual arts (e.g. pop and conceptual art). They dislike impressionism and tend to go art galleries, contemporary art places.

They appreciate comics and art books. Their cultural profile represents this renewed highbrow culture which has incorporated new aesthetic criteria based on transgression, experimentation and the playful. Compared to the previous group, they are also highly educated, but students tend to be over-represented in this group (while pensioners are over-represented among the classically cultured). Their degrees are also more likely to include art-related modules. They can be found in many cities, Antwerp, Ghent, Mechelen, Mons, and Brussels and Liège to a lesser extent (they are less over-represented in these two cities than the former group). When they live in these cities (especially the first four), they tend to have a greater proximity to city centres, compared to the previous group. This could translate the appeal that urban culture in general has for them and support my claim that postmodernist profiles in terms of tastes and cultural activities may develop a greater affinity with urban space as source of aesthetic experience. The comparison between this group and the former highlights the role of age but also of the content of education (especially an artistic one) in people's cultural profiles and in the links they develop with specific places. It also suggests that the same location is likely to be invested with diverse meanings by different groups and that it is this multiplicity of meanings and of social relations that defines it as a place.



Map 5. Proportion of Cultured Progressists per 1000 inhabitants



Map 6. Proportion of Hedonists per 1000 inhabitants

The third group, called 'the hedonists', can be defined by an appreciation of middlebrow culture. They do not often go to a museum or an exhibition and tend not to know about conceptual art, intervention art or abstract expressionism. Nor do they have a taste for opera, classical music, essays, history books, jazz, but they do appreciate pop and rock music and comic books. Their lifestyle is articulated around more ordinary leisure activities (seeing friends, dining out, etc.). In terms of their spatial distribution (Map 6), they cluster less around the main urban areas than the two other groups and are more present in areas with moderate and low density (more present in the Southern part of the country). People aged between 25 and 44 with a higher education (notably short-term higher education) are over-represented in this group, just like employees and administrative occupations.

Finally, the 'Art Lovers' enjoy all art forms, including contemporary art. They are regular visitors to places of art and culture. Although having highbrow tastes, they show broader taste patterns (e.g. world music, novels). They appreciate classical literary works, jazz, essays, opera, classical music but also world music and novels. They tend to dislike electro and rap music and hard rock. Map 7 indicates that they have a clear connection between the big urban centres, Brussels, Liège, Ghent, and Antwerp. Compared to the classically cultured, they are more attracted to city centres, which mix edgy and more traditional forms of culture. This corresponds well to their greater and eclectic cultural appetite. Socio-cultural professionals are over-represented in this group, which tends to be middle-aged.¹⁴ They tend to be highly educated (long-term higher education) and to have followed art-related modules during their degree.

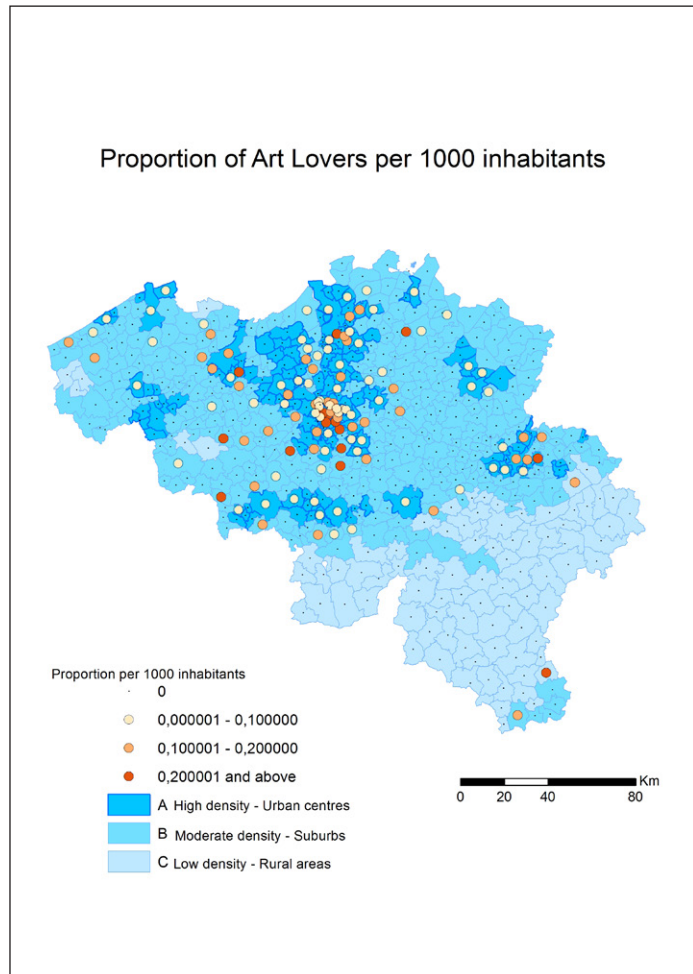
Conclusion

The article represents an exploration of the links between place and culture using geographical maps. The comparison between socio-demographic maps and a general map of museum attendance suggested a possible role of contextual variables. Above all, it is the degree of urbanization which appears to be most associated with patterns of attendance. The role of

other ecological factors is less clear: some areas are indeed characterized by a contrasting situation in which they offer an environment both favourable and unfavourable in some respect to cultural participation in terms, for instance, of the average educational level and the presence of cultural institutions at a close distance. Therefore, the ecological thesis, although certainly insightful, is not sufficient to understand how this connection between place and culture works. This rather indicates that we should move away from a causal representation of place and culture: place shapes social relations in the same way as it is shaped by them. That relationship has hopefully become clear in this article that mapped out the geographical distribution of visitors' cultural profiles.

By testing and revealing the correspondences between the different configurations of visitors' cultural capital and their

place of residence, this article has suggested that place should be perceived in relational terms. This required us to take on board evidence that the content of cultural capital might have changed following changes in the cultural field. As we discussed, the composition of cultural capital cannot be seen any longer as only articulated around a division between highbrow and lowbrow aesthetic cultures. In fact, with the rise of a postmodernist cultural climate, there are arguably different forms of highbrow culture, which do not imply a similar relation to place. In order to assess this, my analysis relied on a sample of art museum visitors in six major museums of modern and contemporary art in Belgium. Given their privileged social position they provided an appropriate case study to test for establishing the multiplicity of highbrow culture. More specifically, I focused on the mapping of four types of visitors defined by a specific configuration or 'profile' in terms of tastes and cultural activities. Out of these four types, three can be defined as 'highbrow' but in different ways: the classically cultured valorize the traditional established high culture, the cultured progressists privilege emerging but socially valued forms of culture, and the art lovers can adequately combine both. These three groups are distributed differently across the Belgian territory. The first type of visitor tends to live on the periphery of large cities whose cultural offer can satisfy their cultural needs. The geographical position of this group seems to have a link with their more advanced age and especially if we compare with



Map 7. Proportion of Art Lovers per 1000 inhabitants

the second and youngest group. The latter is indeed attracted to a more urban life in general, which supports the idea of the development of new urban cultural capital. For the cultured progressists, cities are appealing as they favour urban lifestyles. The third type, the art lovers, can be found in the four largest urban areas in Belgium, including in their city centres, which can mix these different forms of highbrow culture and meet their need for eclecticism. The fourth type, the hedonists, characterized by middlebrow cultural patterns, seems to pay less attention to these big urban centres and can be found in areas with moderate and low density.

This suggests the possibility that, if the environment can influence participation, the habitus and its related cultural dispositions can also 'make the place', and this in two possible ways. First, the amount of *embodied* cultural capital delimits large zones of geographical preferences and especially draws a line between areas with high and moderate density on the one hand and with low density on the other. Second, the composition of this embodied cultural capital refines these zones of geographical preferences according to diverse characteristics, such as the attractiveness of specific cities' cultural ambiance, a tension between the city centre and periphery, and the importance given to an urban lifestyle. My article showed the interest of exploratory visual techniques to examine these links between place and culture and opens new methodological perspectives for sociology; however, the two suggestions presented here should be further tried and tested in future research with a range of other methods.

Last but not least, the maps when perceived in relation to one another also reveal that, in many areas, visitors with different profiles can co-exist, offering some support to the idea of 'social tectonics' (Butler and Robson 2001). This would require further analysis providing more fine-grained and detailed maps of urban neighbourhoods. Yet it already suggests that a country, a city, and even a museum form meeting places, in which co-exist and interact different stories, different trajectories and, as this article shows, a multiplicity of lifestyles. The latter are characterized by diverse values (hedonism, friendliness, inspiration, love of art, etc.) that these places will come to represent for certain people at a certain moment in time. This makes us understand how a place, a museum for instance, can be lived and experienced in many different ways. The symbolic boundaries inscribed in space can then appear very fluid.

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Notes

- 1 He did note however that 'a number of differences that are generally attributed to the effect of geographical space, e.g. the opposition between center and periphery. are the effect of distance in social space. i.e.. the unequal distribution of the different kinds of capital in geographical space' (1985: 743).
- 2 Note that the MAMAC has since closed its doors.
- 3 These six museums form an almost exhaustive sample of existing museums of modern and contemporary art in Belgium.
- 4 Sometimes I had only one of the two (either the postcode or the name of the place of residence) and I had to infer one from the other. Some places can be related to several postcodes. When it was the case, the best proxy was used.
- 5 A Belgian commune is the first level of democratic representation.

- 6 More information is available here: http://statbel.fgov.be/fr/statistiques/chiffres/environnement/geo/typologie_communes/ consulted on 17/11/15
- 7 This article will focus less on this last aspect because no data have been specifically collected on the issue. I will rely on some news items to contextualise some of the cities I am going to discuss but there are some limitations to this strategy. For instance, the meanings associated to a city are multiple and would require a study of its own to be fully unraveled. This will partly be illustrated by the diversity of lifestyles that can co-exist in the same area.
- 8 <http://archives.lesoir.be/les-sept-cliches-capitiaux-de-charleroi-enquete-3-7> <http://archives.lesoir.be/les-sept-cliches-capitiaux-de-charleroi-enquete-3-7-t-20100420-00VUGF.html?query=charleroiandqueryand=charleroi+la+plus+laideandqueryor=charleroiandfirstHit=0andby=10andwhen=-1andsort=datedescandpos=2andall=16andnav=1> accessed on 27 November 2014.
- 9 <http://www.charleroi.be/asphalte1-la-biennale-dart-urbain-reprend-la-route>; <http://www.theguardian.com/welcome-to-wallonia/charleroi-guide-markets-museums-things-to-do>, accessed on 27 November 2014.
- 10 For reasons of data protection, I have decided not to show the maps by museum.
- 11 People who are still studying are not included.
- 12 Available at the following address http://census2011.fgov.be/data/fresult/age-avg_fr.html, consulted on 18/11/15, reproduced with the agreement of Statistics Belgium
- 13 I have left out the group called 'the passive cultured' because their profile is rather similar to the 'classically cultured'. The 'distant', characterised by a non-familiarity with highbrow culture, form an interesting group but too small to be adequately mapped.
- 14 For example, sociologists, psychologists, social workers but also artists, cultural producers and intermediaries (working in media for instance).

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